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Who inhabits the European public sphere? Winners and losers, supporters and opponents in Europeanised political debates

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Abstract. European integration shifts the distribution of political opportunities to influence public debates, improving the relative influence of some collective actors, and weakening that of others. This article investigates which actors profit from and which actors stand to lose from the Europeanisation of political communication in mass-mediated public spheres. Furthermore, it asks to what extent these effects of Europeanisation can help one to understand collective actors' evaluation of European institutions and the integration process. Data is analysed on some 20,000 political claims by a variety of collective actors, drawn from 28 newspapers in seven European countries in the period 1990–2002, across seven different issue fields with varying degrees of EU policy-making power. The results show that government and executive actors are by far the most important beneficiaries of the Europeanisation of public debates compared to legislative and party actors, and even more so compared to civil society actors, who are extremely weakly represented in Europeanised public debates. The stronger is the type of Europeanisation that is considered, the stronger are these biases. For most actors, a close correspondence is found between how Europeanisation affects their influence in the public debate, on the one hand, and their public support for, or opposition to, European institutions and the integration process, on the other.

Introduction

Policy decisions in Europe are increasingly taken in the supranational and intergovernmental arenas, but the nation-state has remained the primary focus for collective identities and citizen participation. This discrepancy between Europe's institutional development, on the one hand, and the continuing predominance of the national political space as the arena for public debates and participatory citizenship, on the other, is at the core of Europe's 'democratic deficit'. Since the early 1990s, the former 'permissive consensus' on European integration has eroded. Trust in European institutions and support for the integration process have steadily declined, and so has voter participation in European elections in many countries (Schmitt & Thomassen 1999). The 2004 European parliamentary elections showed a record low turnout and a shift towards Eurosceptic parties. The failed ratifications of the European

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constitutional project in the French and Dutch referenda of 2005 are further indications that citizen support for the European integration process is no longer self-evident.

More even than on the national level, the communication flow between the European Union (EU) and other European-level institutions and the public depends on the mass media. The media fulfil four crucial functions in the European policy process. First, in the absence of direct communicative links, European actors, issues and policies have to be made visible by the media, and it is in this public forum that they must gain public legitimacy (*legitimation* function). Second, with the partial exception of opinion polling – which provides only punctual, pre-structured and non-discursive access to the public opinion – European policy makers depend on the mass media for information about the concerns of the citizenry (*responsiveness* function). Third and conversely, the public can build its opinion about European institutions and the complexities of multilevel policies only to a small extent on direct personal experience and must therefore rely on how Europe becomes visible in the mass media (*accountability* function). Finally, participation of citizens in the European policy process usually requires access to the mass media. Although a small number of resourceful and well-organised actors have direct access to European policy makers (e.g., in the context of the Brussels lobbying circuit), most forms of citizens' participation through nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), civic initiatives and social movements can influence policy makers only if they are able to achieve visibility in the mass media (*participation* function).

The conditions for a European public sphere that can fulfil these functions have come to the foreground of the social-scientific debate about European integration (among many others, see Eder et al. 1998; Neidhardt et al. 2000; Eriksen & Fossum 2000; Semetko et al. 2000; De Beus & Mak 2001; Risse 2002; Kevin 2003; Trenz 2004). This discussion has long remained normative and speculative. This article, and the wider project of which it is part, contributes to a more empirically grounded view on the Europeanisation of public spheres. We do not focus on public opinion as measured in surveys (i.e., on the individual level of the opinions and perceptions of European citizens), but on the degree of Europeanisation of public debates and collective political mobilisation as they become visible in the European print media (i.e., *publicised* opinion). Our first question is how European integration has affected the opportunities of different collective actors to intervene in public debates and achieve public visibility. From the point of view of the democratic deficit, we will be especially interested in contrasting the accessibility of Europeanised political debates across three categories of actors: government and executive actors, legislative and party actors, and civil society actors.

Subsequently, we turn to our second research question – namely to what extent there is a correspondence between actors' access to Europeanised policy debates, and their evaluation of European institutions and of the European integration process. We argue that the impact of Europeanisation on actors' discursive influence adds to our understanding of the divergent support for European integration and for European institutions across various collective actors. We hypothesise that actors who have limited access to Europeanised public debates will also be critical of European integration and institutions, whereas the actors whose voices are most prominent in debates on European issues will be more favourably inclined towards European integration and institutions. We empirically address these questions with content-analytic data on public claims-making in seven issue fields (monetary politics, agriculture, immigration, military troop deployment, pensions, education and the meta-issue of European integration) in the print media of seven European countries (Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands and Switzerland) in the period 1990–2002

Theoretical framework

If one looks for a genuinely supranational public sphere on the European level, there is not much to be found (see Schlesinger 1999). There have been a few attempts to establish European-wide mass media, but most of these have quickly disappeared (such as the daily newspaper *The European*) or lead a marginal existence (e.g., the television station *Euronews* or the weekly *European Voice*, which both reach only small audiences). Transnational media that have been able to carve out a niche in the media landscape have a global, rather than European profile and audience (e.g., *CNN*, *BBC World*, *International Herald Tribune*, *Le Monde diplomatique*, *Financial Times*).

When focusing on the mass media public sphere, one therefore arrives naturally at a 'Europeanisation' approach (e.g., Green Cowles et al. 2001; Hix & Goetz 2000; Radaelli 2000; Ledrach 2001) that focuses on the domestic impacts of European integration – in this case, the ways in which European integration affects public debates in *national* news media (Gerhards 1993, 2000). Imig and Tarrow (2001) have similarly shown that social movement mobilisation on European issues only rarely takes the form of full-fledged European-wide campaigns and is more often of the 'domesticated' variant in which national social movements make claims within the national public sphere, but do so referring to European institutions, norms or legislation.

We assume that – not least because of the language factor – nationally-based mass media are here to stay, but that their coverage may increasingly

include European actors and issues. There are two basic forms in which this may happen. First, actors and institutions from the European level (e.g., EU commissioners or the European Parliament) may become more prominent as speakers in public debates in national news media. We will refer to this form as 'supranational Europeanisation' of public debates. Second, claims made by national actors in national media may increasingly refer to European institutions, issues, legal frameworks, norms and identities. This we will call 'vertical Europeanisation' of public debates. Several authors have argued that Europeanisation of public debates can also occur without any direct reference to European-level actors or policies (e.g., Risse 2002; Van der Steeg 2002; Koopmans & Erbe 2004). Many EU policies as well non-EU forms of European integration (e.g., in the context of the Council of Europe or the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) have an intergovernmental rather than supranational basis. This may lead to increased media attention for actors from one European country in the national news media of another country. We refer to this as 'horizontal Europeanisation'. In an intergovernmental polity, other member states can no longer be treated as foreign countries whose internal politics are not relevant for one's own country. This tendency is reinforced by the interdependence created by common market policies and the freedom of movement within the EU. For instance, if Germany liberalises its naturalisation policies, this is immediately relevant for other EU Member States because, once naturalised, immigrants from Germany can freely travel to and take up work in another EU country.

We thus distinguish three forms of Europeanisation of public debates and claims making:

> *Supranational Europeanisation*: an increased role for actors and institutions from the European level in public debates in national news media.
> *Vertical Europeanisation*: when national actors address or refer to European institutions, issues, legal frameworks, norms and identities.
> *Horizontal Europeanisation*: increased attention for actors and institutions from other European countries in national news media.

None of these three forms implies anything *a priori* about the qualitative nature of Europeanised public communication. In other words, we do not assume that Europeanisation of public communication entails increasing consensus or convergence across countries (see similarly Radaelli 2000; Ledrach 2001; Vink 2002). Our notion of Europeanisation also extends beyond a more narrow conception of 'EU-isation', which would include only references to EU institutions, policies and Member States (similarly Vink 2002). In line with this wider conception of 'Europeanisation', our analysis includes news media from

a non-EU member state (Switzerland) next to six EU members. Moreover, our operationalisations of supranational, vertical and horizontal Europeanisation include claims by and references to European-level institutions and conventions outside the framework of the EU, as well as claims by actors from European countries outside the EU.

In earlier papers from our project, we have investigated these three types of Europeanisation from a quantitative perspective, focusing on the shares of Europeanised claims compared to purely national claims-making, and on the question to what extent there is a trend of increased Europeanised claims-making over the period 1990–2002 (e.g., Koopmans & Erbe 2004; Koopmans & Pfetsch 2003). These analyses reveal that the share of Europeanised claims diverges strongly across issue fields. In issue fields where European competencies are strong (e.g., monetary and agricultural politics), public debates are strongly Europeanised: European-level actors and actors from other European countries appear frequently as speakers or as addressees of claims, and issues are frequently discussed in a European frame of reference. In the other four issue fields that we studied (immigration, troop deployment, pensions and retirement, and education) Europeanisation tendencies were much less strong. This is less a result of a lack of media interest in European issues than of the fact that most decision-making competencies in these fields have thus far remained on the national level. These results indicate that if there is a public sphere aspect to the European democratic deficit, it is not primarily of a quantitative nature (i.e., the problem is not that European actors and issues are not sufficiently reported in the media). However, this leaves open the possibility that there may be qualitative aspects of Europeanised political communication that contribute to the democratic deficit.

We therefore now address the important question of how the Europeanisation of public debates affects the opportunities for public claims-making of different categories of actors. In doing so, we follow the lead of theories of social movements and collective action, which have emphasised the role of so-called 'political opportunity structures' for explaining patterns of political mobilisation (e.g., Tarrow 1994; Kriesi et al. 1995).[1] Hix and Goetz (2000:12) have related this theoretical tradition to the study of Europeanisation: '[A] new institutional arena at the European level impacts on domestic political systems by providing a new "structure of opportunities" for domestic actors.' The transfer of competencies from the national to the intergovernmental and supranational European arenas opens up opportunities and makes resources available for some actors, but not – or not to the same extent – for others. Similarly, the erosion of undivided national sovereignty may improve the opportunities of some actors, but may also negatively affect those of actors who obtained institutionalised access to national resources and opportunity

structures. European integration unavoidably implies a redistribution of power, not just institutionally, but also regarding public debates and political mobilisation (see also, e.g., Moravcsik 1994; Marks & McAdam 1999; Rucht 2000).

Next to shifting political opportunity structures, a second factor that may influence the chances of actors to intervene in Europeanised public debates are differences in the news selection process between national coverage and international or European news coverage. National news reporting is subject to less strict selection pressures than international or supranational coverage. In non-domestic news coverage, international press agencies play a more important role, and among foreign correspondents there is a stronger tendency to rely on institutional sources and news routines (e.g., Schulz 1997; Meyer 1999). This implies greater difficulties for less resourceful actors to get access to European and foreign news coverage, and a greater reliance in such news on institutional actors, especially executive and governmental actors such as the European Commission, or national foreign ministers and heads of state.

While there is consensus that European integration affects the relative opportunities for different actors, it is much less clear in which direction such changes go. On the one hand, the weakness of democratic access on the European level and the bureaucratic and arcane nature of the European decision-making process may lead one to expect a European public sphere that is inhabited primarily by bureaucrats, statesman and perhaps a few other resourceful actors. The EU and other European-level institutions are, however, also often seen as counterweights against entrenched national powers, which offer opportunities for a variety of interest groups, NGOs, social movements and other civil society actors (see, e.g., Soysal 1994; Eder et al. 1998; Wiener 1998). Hix and Goetz (2000: 14) discuss various reasons why European integration may benefit either resourceful elite actors, or actors that are relatively weak in the domestic arena, but ultimately arrive at the optimistic conclusion that 'the openness of the EU policy process and the pursuit of neo-pluralist strategies by the Commission (such as subsidising under-represented groups) ensure that both diffuse and concentrated interests tend to be able to pursue exit and veto opportunities and have access to key information'.

In this article, we investigate the empirical merits of these different views on the consequences of Europeanisation. We address the question of the composition of Europeanised public debates from two angles. First, we ask who participates in Europeanised public debates of the three types (supranational, vertical and horizontal) and compare this to debates that remain fully within a national frame of reference. By analysing which actors are overrepresented and which are underrepresented in Europeanised claims-making, we

get an indication of who benefits most from the Europeanisation of public debates. Second, we turn to actors' subjective evaluations and ask what positions with regard to European institutions and the European integration process different actors take in the public debate. This will give us an indication of the extent to which actors consider European institutions as their allies and see the European integration process as congruent with their interests. We hypothesise that these subjective and objective dimensions are related to each other, and that there is a correspondence between the degree to which actors gain access to Europeanised public debates and their subjective evaluation of European integration. This hypothesis, too, can be derived from the literature on political opportunity structures, which has shown that closed political institutions tend to provoke confrontational challenges, whereas open opportunity structures invite more consensual and cooperative strategies from collective actors (e.g., Kriesi et al. 1995: 44–51)

Data and methodology

For the data collection we use the methodology of *political claim analysis* (Koopmans & Statham 1999), which takes individual instances of claims-making by public actors as the unit of analysis. This approach differs from traditional media content analysis, which usually takes newspaper articles as the unit of analysis and uses article-level variables to investigate how journalists frame the news. Traditional methods can tell us with which frequency certain actors and issues are mentioned, and to what extent they co-occur in news stories, but they tell us nothing about the relations between actors, their role in public debates or the positions they take with regard to which issues. It is precisely such information about who addresses who on which issues and referring to which spatial and political contexts that we need in order to answer questions about the Europeanisation of public spheres and the different forms it may take.

An instance of claims-making (shorthand: 'a claim') is a unit of strategic action in the public sphere that we define as: *the purposive and public articulation of political demands, calls to action, proposals, criticisms or physical attacks, which, actually or potentially, affect the interests or integrity of the claimants and/or other collective actors*. Of each claim, we code the actor or actors who make it, the addressees at which it is (critically, affirmatively or neutrally) directed, the issues that are addressed and the ways in which these issues are framed referring to specific legal, normative, institutional and spatial contexts. We thus have information about those aspects of claims that we need in order to answer our research questions: whether the actor behind a claim

(the claimant) was from the same country as the newspaper that reports the claim, or whether it was from another European country or from the European supranational or intergovernmental levels; whether the claim referred only to national legal, normative, institutional and spatial contexts, or whether it included references to other European countries or to the supranational or intergovernmental European levels; and finally, whether the claimant expressed support, opposition or a neutral attitude towards European institutions and the European integration process.

Claims are included in our data regardless of who makes them and where they are made; our data include claims by state actors, economic actors, journalists and news media,[2] as well as representatives of civil society. Claims can be made by organisations and their spokespersons as well as by diffuse collectives (e.g., a group of farmers). The actors who make claims may be from the European, national, regional and local levels, and they can be from the country where the newspaper is published as well as from another European country.[3] As already stated above, we do not limit Europeanisation to 'EU-isation' and therefore use an inclusive definition of Europe that includes not just the 25 EU Member States plus all applicants including Turkey, but also other European countries such as Norway, Switzerland and the Balkan States. We also include claims by non-EU supranational and intergovernmental institutions on the European level, such as the Council of Europe or the European Free Trade Association.[4] Comparative analyses across our seven countries provide support for this inclusive view because the degree of Europeanisation of public debates in Swiss newspapers turns out to exceed that in the United Kingdom (Koopmans 2004a). This shows that attention for European institutions and policies, and for actors and issues in other European countries, is not necessarily tied to EU membership.

Against the use of media as a source, one may argue that many attempts at claims-making fail to pass the media's selection filters. For our research question, however, it is the publicly visible claims that count, since by definition only those that become public can contribute to the Europeanisation of public spheres. In each of the seven countries, two quality newspapers, one more left-oriented and one more right-oriented, have been chosen as our main sources.[5] For the year 2000, we additionally include a regional newspaper from a region with a specific identity,[6] and a tabloid newspaper catering to a non-elite public.[7] Where no genuine tabloid was present, we chose a newspaper that is close in style to a tabloid,[8] or another fourth newspaper, the choice of which depended on the particular composition of the national media landscape.[9] We coded the years 1990, 1995 and 2000–2002. Given the labour-intensive nature of this type of content coding, we could not code all issues of all newspapers for all years. For 2000–2002 we coded one issue per week of each of the two quality

papers, and for 1990 and 1995 one issue per two weeks. The third and fourth newspapers for the year 2000 were also coded on the basis of a one-issue-per-two-weeks sample. Even with these restrictions, our dataset is based on a formidable amount of information: we scanned more than 2,500 issues of 28 different European newspapers and coded more than 20,000 individual claims. The codebook, as well as the results of an extensive and successful reliability test, are available on our project website at: http://europub.wz-berlin.de.

The nature of nationally confined public debates

To judge if certain types of actors are underrepresented or overrepresented in Europeanised claims-making, we first need to establish a standard of comparison. This standard consists of claims that are not Europeanised in any of the above-defined three senses – that is, claims that are made by actors from the same country as the newspaper that reports them and that make no reference whatsoever to other European countries or to European-level actors, issues, legal frameworks or norms. In order to keep the reference category as pure as possible, we moreover exclude claims that refer to supranational or intergovernmental levels beyond Europe (e.g., the United Nations).

Table 1 shows the shares of different actors in such ideal-typical 'nationalised' claims-making in six issue fields (this table excludes the issue of European integration because it has, by definition, a European dimension).[10] We distinguish three main categories of actors: state and party actors, media actors and (non-media) civil society actors. Within the category of state and party actors, we make the common distinction between government/executive, judiciary and legislative actors. Central banks are listed as a separate category because of their importance in monetary politics. Legislative actors and political party representatives have been taken together because in our sources it was difficult to distinguish them. The same persons could alternatively be identified as parliamentarians or party spokespersons and it was difficult to decide which to code. Although we classify them together with government actors in the broader 'state and party actor category', we acknowledge that political parties occupy an intermediary position between state and civil society. Legislative actors likewise differ from other state actors because they are directly elected by and responsible to the public. Therefore, legislative and party actors merit special treatment in the discussion of our results. The category of media actors consists of explicit claims made by journalists of the coded newspaper, as well as quotations of comments and editorials from other newspapers. The categories of civil society actors are self-explanatory. The 'other' category consists mainly of social movement organisations specialising

Table 1. Claims by own national actors with no European references by actor type and issue field

	Total	Monetary politics	Agriculture	Immigration	Troop deployment	Pensions and retirement	Education
Government/executive	34.4	14.1	45.4	43.8	42.7	29.6	32.2
Central banks	2.1	25.9	–	0.1	–	0.4	–
Judiciary	2.4	0.3	0.7	5.6	–	2.5	1.9
Legislative and parties	19.6	7.6	8.3	27.1	25.6	28.9	15.8
Total state and party actors	58.5	47.9	54.4	76.6	68.3	61.4	50.0
Media	6.2	12.6	2.7	5.3	22.4	5.0	4.5
Employers and firms	4.6	15.6	5.6	3.1	0.4	7.9	2.0
Unions and employees	6.7	2.4	2.2	1.2	1.6	13.9	8.7
Economists and financial experts	2.0	16.8	0.2	0.6	0.8	2.9	0.2
Farmers	2.1	0.3	21.6	0.2	–	0.1	–
Consumers	0.3	–	2.0	–	–	0.4	0.1
Immigrants	0.7	–	–	3.8	–	–	–
Students and educational professionals	11.9	0.0	1.2	0.8	0.4	0.1	28.5
Science, research and other professionals	3.8	2.6	6.6	2.8	0.8	4.3	4.0
Other civil society groups and organisations	3.2	0.9	3.4	5.6	5.3	4.0	2.1
Total non-media civil society actors	35.3	39.5	42.9	18.1	9.3	33.6	45.5
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	4,446	340	408	862	246	798	1,792

on issues such as women's emancipation, retirement, peace, human rights, health and the environment, whose shares were too small to list separately.

The picture of national public debates that emerges from Table 1 is one of a strong dominance of institutional and resourceful actors. In all issue fields, government and executive actors (including central banks) are the most important voices in public debates. In monetary politics, agriculture, immigration and troop deployment, they are responsible for between 40 and 45 per cent of all claims. In pensions and retirement (30 per cent) and education (32 per cent) their predominance is less outspoken. The judiciary only plays a noteworthy role in the field of immigration, where it contributes to discussions on residence and asylum rights. The contribution of legislative and party actors is in all fields inferior to that of government and executive actors, but the extent of the difference varies importantly. In monetary politics and agriculture, the executive's share of claims is more than five times as high as that of legislative and party actors. In the other issue fields, legislative and party actors are more important claim makers, with shares between 16 (education) and 29 per cent (pensions and retirement). In five out of the six fields, state and party actors taken together are responsible for 50 per cent or more of all claims, with a maximum of 77 per cent (immigration). Only in monetary politics does their share fall slightly below half of all claims (48 per cent). However, this does not make monetary politics an exception to the general rule that resourceful actors dominate the public debate since the majority of civil society claims in this field are made by employers and firms (16 per cent) and economic and financial experts (17 per cent). The influence of these actors contrasts sharply with that of other groups that arguably have a stake in monetary politics: labour unions (2 per cent) and consumer groups (no claims at all) are virtually absent from public debates on monetary politics.

In other issue fields, too, less well-organised and less powerful groups have only a very limited voice in the public debate. Consumer groups (2 per cent) and environmental groups (1.5 per cent; included in the table among 'other civil society groups') are quite insignificant in debates on agriculture, even though the period of our data includes controversies over consumer safety and environment-related issues such as BSE and foot and mouth disease. Likewise, immigrants (4 per cent) are marginal in public controversies over their rights, the peace movement is marginal in debates on troop deployment (1 per cent; included in 'other civil society'), and pensioners and elderly people (2.5 per cent; included in 'other civil society') hardly have a voice in debates over pensions and retirement. There are only a few examples of civil society groups that do command considerable public attention: farmers in the field of agriculture (22 per cent), labour unions in debates on pensions and retirement (14 per cent), and teachers, schools, parents and students in the field of education

(29 per cent). The media, finally, are especially relevant as speakers on monetary (13 per cent) and troop deployment (22 per cent) issues.

Who participates in Europeanised public debates?

The above results suggest that nationally confined public debates are strongly biased towards actors who command strong institutional power. The question is to what extent Europeanisation of public debates alleviates or exacerbates these power differentials. We begin this investigation by looking in Table 2 at the strongest form of Europeanisation – namely the participation of supranational and intergovernmental actors from the European level in public debates. To analyse this type of supranationally Europeanised claims-making, we distinguish the same actors as in Table 1. 'Government/executive' now refers to European institutions such as the European Commission, the various EU Councils of Ministers or the Council of Europe. Likewise, the other categories refer to the European-level equivalent of national organisations and institutions (e.g., the European Central Bank, the European Parliament, and European-level parties, interest groups and NGO's). Besides formal organisations on the European level, we also coded a claim as having a European-level actor if it was supported by a coalition of actors from a range of European countries (e.g., a demonstration of farmers from various countries in Brussels).

Table 2 leaves no doubt about which actors from the European level are most effective in making their mark on public debates. In all six substantive issue fields, the share of executive actors is two to three times as large as it is in Table 1 for the reference category of national actors making purely national claims. In spite of what is sometimes said about its deficient communication strategies (e.g., Meyer 1999), the European Commission is by far the most often cited European-level organisation and is responsible for more than half of all executive claims, followed at a distance by the various European Councils. Commission President Romano Prodi alone is cited 333 times in our sample, more than any national politician and 2.5 times as often as all European-level civil society actors taken together (131 claims). As on the national level, the European executive dominates over the legislative. However, the relationship is much more skewed than on the national level. The European Parliament's role is largest in discussions on European integration, but even there its share (24 per cent) is only a third of that of the various branches of the European executive (71 per cent). That European-level media do not play a significant role is not surprising, but that European-level civil society actors command a share of only 3 per cent of all claims stemming from European-level actors is suggestive evidence of a severe democratic deficit. It

Table 2. Claims by European-level actors by actor type and issue field

	Total	Monetary politics	Agriculture	Immigration	Troop deployment	Pensions and retirement	Education	European integration
Executive	65.9	45.0	86.2	74.4	88.1	77.6	63.2	71.0
Central banks	14.4	47.6		–	–	4.1	5.3	1.0
Judiciary	0.7	–	0.4	1.8	–	2.0	–	1.2
Legislative and parties	15.6	4.0	8.8	18.3	11.0	4.1	15.8	24.3
Total state and party actors	96.7	96.6	95.4	94.5	99.2	87.8	84.2	97.5
Media	0.2	0.2	–	–	–	–	–	0.3
Employers and firms	0.3	0.4	–	0.6	–	4.1	–	0.1
Unions and employees	0.4	0.1	–	–	0.8	–	–	0.6
Economists and financial experts	0.7	2.0	–	–	–	6.1	–	0.1
Farmers	0.3	–	2.1	–	–	–	–	0.0
Consumers	0.0	0.2	–	–	–	–	–	–
Immigrants	0.0	–	–	0.6	–	–	–	
Students and educational professionals	0.1	–	–	–	–	–	15.8	0.0
Science, research and other professionals	0.6	0.2	2.1	1.8	–	–	–	0.5
Other civil society groups and organisations	0.6	0.4	0.4	2.4	–	2.0	–	0.7
Total non-media civil society actors	3.1	3.2	4.6	5.5	0.8	12.2	15.8	2.2
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	4,233	1,232	522	164	118	49	19	2,129

is difficult to see how the absence of any form of public visibility could not negatively affect the bargaining power of civil society groups within the European decision-making process.

However, we should not jump to conclusions on the basis of this one form of Europeanisation of public debates alone. What about horizontal Europeanisation of public debates, the coverage of claims by actors from other European countries? Table 3 shows us which actors benefit from such transnational flows of political communication. We find many tendencies that also characterise claims-making by European-level actors, only less outspoken. Government and executive actors play an important role in horizontally Europeanised claims-making, ranging from 43 per cent in education politics to 78 per cent in debates on troop deployment. Legislative and party actors fare much worse (between 4 per cent in agriculture and 15 per cent in European integration) and command in every issue field a smaller share than among the claims with a national frame of reference in Table 1. Most civil society actors are likewise underrepresented among horizontally Europeanised claims when compared to the claims with a purely national frame of reference.

For the media the story is different. In most issue fields, claims made by foreign European news media are represented to a similar extent as are national media in Table 1. Often this takes the form of overviews of voices from foreign media, either on important national controversies that have aroused attention abroad, or on common European issues. The main conclusion remains however that the actors that manage to cross the boundaries of national public spheres are overwhelmingly core executive actors such as heads of government and cabinet ministers. Like supranational Europeanisation, the transnational flow of public communication offers additional opportunities for those actors that are already dominant on the national level and exacerbates rather than compensates for the weak position of civil society actors.

We now turn to the final, vertical variant of Europeanisation, in which national actors address European institutions or frame issues with reference to European identities, interests, norms and legal frameworks. National actors operating in their own national public arena face the strategic choice whether or not to refer in their claims to European dimensions or to remain fully within a national frame of reference. As any other form of resource deployment, discursive framing is a matter of choice under conditions of limited resources and opportunities. Actors frame issues in a certain way because they hope (or have learned from past experience) that such framing increases their chances of having an impact on public debates and policy decisions.

The results in Table 4 show, in line with our earlier results, that government and executive actors are more likely to use Europeanised frames than

Table 3. Claims by national actors from other European countries by actor type and issue field

	Total	Monetary politics	Agriculture	Immigration	Troop deployment	Pensions and retirement	Education	European integration
Government/executive	63.3	47.8	71.2	65.1	78.0	43.8	43.4	68.0
Central banks	4.3	19.1	–		–	–	–	0.3
Judiciary	0.6	–	1.5	3.3	0.3	2.7	3.9	0.3
Legislative and parties	11.6	7.5	4.1	12.3	7.8	12.3	10.1	15.0
Total state and party actors	79.9	74.3	76.8	80.1	86.1	58.9	57.4	83.5
Media	7.9	7.9	5.3	6.6	10.6	2.7	3.9	8.4
Employers and firms	1.9	3.7	1.2	1.0	–	9.6	1.6	1.6
Unions and employees	0.6	0.1	0.9	–	0.8	12.3	3.9	0.2
Economists and financial experts	2.4	9.4	–	0.5	–	6.8	–	0.3
Farmers	0.8	–	8.8	–	–	–	–	0.4
Consumers	0.1	0.4	0.9	–	–	–	–	–
Immigrants	0.4	–	–	3.8	0.3	–	0.8	–
Students and educational professionals	1.0	0.2	1.2	0.8	–	1.4	24.0	0.3
Science, research and other professionals	2.2	1.6	3.5	1.5	0.8	8.2	3.1	2.3
Other civil society groups and organisations	2.8	2.3	1.5	5.8	1.5	–	5.4	2.9
Total non-media civil society actors	12.2	17.9	18.0	13.3	3.3	38.4	38.7	8.1
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	4,722	1,028	340	396	396	73	129	2,360

Table 4. Claims by own national actors with a European frame of reference by actor type and issue field

	Total	Monetary politics	Agriculture	Immigration	Troop deployment	Pensions and retirement	Education	European integration
Government/executive	38.9	28.0	48.0	46.4	48.5	39.0	32.1	42.4
Central banks	2.7	8.5	–	–	–	1.7	–	0.2
Judiciary	0.6	0.2	1.4	3.2	3.1	3.4	1.9	0.4
Legislative and parties	17.4	10.1	9.8	19.6	22.7	5.1	15.1	23.5
Total state and party actors	59.7	46.9	59.3	69.3	74.2	49.2	49.1	66.4
Media	19.1	20.2	10.2	17.4	21.6	5.1	7.5	20.9
Employers and firms	4.6	9.8	2.0	1.4	–	13.6	5.7	2.2
Unions and employees	1.7	1.7	2.0	2.1	–	10.2	5.7	1.3
Economists and financial experts	5.2	14.2	0.2	0.4	–	11.9	–	1.3
Farmers	2.4	0.1	20.2	–	–	–	–	0.2
Consumers	0.5	1.1	1.5	–	–	–	–	–
Immigrants	0.2	–	–	2.1	–	–	–	0.1
Students and educational professionals	0.8	0.4	0.2	2.5	–	3.4	22.6	0.6
Science, research and other professionals	2.8	2.2	1.7	2.5	2.1	1.7	5.7	3.4
Other civil society groups and organisations	3.4	4.4	3.7	2.1	2.1	5.1	3.8	3.6
Total non-media civil society actors	21.2	32.9	30.5	13.3	4.2	45.7	43.4	12.7
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	5,316	1,610	589	280	97	59	53	2,628

legislative and party actors. Except in the education field, the share of government and executive actors is larger among the claims with a Europeanised frame in Table 4 than it is among the purely national claims in Table 1. Legislative and party actors command similar shares in both tables in most issue fields, but in immigration politics and pensions and retirement they are clearly underrepresented among Europeanised claims. The share of civil society actors is again lower than among purely national claims. The only exception is pensions and retirement politics, but a closer inspection of the kind of civil society actors that account for this result confirms the general trend that Europeanised claims-making correlates with institutional power. Compared to Table 1, the civil society actors that expand their share in pensions and retirement claims with a Europeanised frame are employers (14 per cent in Table 4 against 8 per cent in Table 1) and financial experts (12 per cent in Table 4 and 3 per cent in Table 1). By contrast, the share of labour unions declines (from 14 per cent in Table 1 to 10 per cent in Table 4) and pensioners' organisations are completely absent among the Europeanised claims. The low number of cases for this issue field in Table 4 implies that we should not attach too much weight to these figures, but they do fall into the by now familiar pattern.

Combining the three types of Europeanisation, the results are clear-cut. The only actors that are systematically overrepresented in supranationally, horizontally, as well as vertically Europeanised claims-making are government and executive actors. Across all issue fields, they are responsible for 33 per cent of all purely national claims (see the total column in Table 1), but across the three forms of Europeanised claims-making their share rises to 54 per cent (average computed across Tables 2 to 4). Media actors are, somewhat surprisingly perhaps, the only other actor type that is more prominently represented in Europeanised claims-making (6 per cent of purely national claims against a share of 10 per cent of Europeanised claims). Europeanisation of claims-making does not strengthen the hand of legislative and party actors, whose share is 20 per cent in purely national claims-making and 15 per cent across all forms of Europeanised claims-making. That may not seem a large difference, but to appreciate its importance one must look at the relative influence of legislative versus executive actors. Among purely national claims, the executive outnumbers legislative and party actors two to one, but among Europeanised claims the proportion is almost four to one. Civil society actors, finally, are clearly the least able to profit from the opening up of Europeanised discursive spaces. Among purely national claims, they command a reasonable share of 35 per cent of all claims (Table 1), but among Europeanised claims, they are responsible for only 13 per cent of claims (Tables 2 to 4 combined).[11]

Specific civil society actors are better considered in the context of the specific issue fields in which they are most active. In almost all cases, such an

issue-specific perspective reveals a considerable decline in discursive influence for these actors among Europeanised claims. For instance, farmers make 22 per cent of the purely national claims on agriculture (Table 1), but only 11 per cent of Europeanised claims (Tables 2 to 4 combined). In monetary politics, employers command 16 per cent of national claims, but only 5 per cent of Europeanised claims. Labour unions likewise have less influence in Europeanised debates in the issue fields where they are strong (14 against 8 per cent in pensions and retirement and 9 against 5 per cent in education). Pensioners' groups, already very weak among national claims in pensions and retirement politics (2.5 per cent) are even weaker (0.6 per cent; included in 'other civil society') among Europeanised claims. The same holds for consumer groups on agricultural issues (2 versus 0.8 per cent), and to a lesser extent for immigrants in their field (4 against 3 per cent). The only example of a civil society actor that does better among Europeanised claims concerns employers' organisations in the pensions and retirement field, whose share among Europeanised claims (9 per cent) is slightly higher than among purely national claims (8 per cent).

Who supports and who opposes European institutions and European integration?

Having established which actors populate the Europeanised public sphere, we now ask what positions these actors take with regard to European institutions and European integration. Our guiding hypothesis is that collective actors' subjective attitude towards Europe reflects the degree to which they profit from the Europeanisation of public debates. We expect, therefore, that government and executive actors will be more favourable towards European integration and European institutions than legislative and party actors, and we expect both to be more supportive of European integration than civil society actors. The media, finally, are expected to fall somewhere in between, but more on the supportive side.

To validate these expectations, we limit our analysis to claims that have a European dimension (i.e., we exclude the purely national claims reported in Table 1, as well as those from Table 3 that only refer to the national policies of foreign European countries) and look at how actors evaluate European institutions and the European integration process. We begin by looking at claims that directly address European actors and institutions, either by appealing to them to fulfil certain demands, or by expressing criticism or support. We computed an average score for each category of actors indicating how positively or negatively they viewed the European institutions and actors they addressed. The score is computed by assigning a +1 score each time that

European addressees are the target of support, –1 if they are the target of criticism and 0 if they are targeted in a neutral or ambivalent way. These scores are then averaged across claims. The resulting average score on a range between +1 and –1 indicates to what extent European institutions are evaluated positively or negatively by a particular category of actors. To allow us to place the evaluations given to European institutions into perspective, Table 5 also gives the average scores for the evaluation of national addressees. Thus, the table shows if a particular category of actors views European institutions more or less positively than national institutions.

At first sight the results seem to confirm the prejudice that public discourse with regard to European institutions is overwhelmingly negative. Indeed, the average evaluation of European institutions across all actors is negative (–0.12). However, political discourse generally tends to be negatively oriented for the simple reason that in a competitive environment political actors have less incentive to publicly support than to criticise other actors. Moreover, the public is more interested in conflict and criticism than in issues on which everybody agrees. The real touchstone for judging whether public discourse with regard to European institutions is overly 'Eurosceptic' is therefore how European institutions fare compared to their counterparts on the national level. Seen from this angle, the picture looks much less bleak because national institutions tend to be evaluated more negatively (–0.21) than European ones.

However, these averages hide important differences between actors. As we expected, state and party actors (–0.06) evaluate European institutions much more positively (or better: less negatively) than civil society actors (–0.30). However, within both categories, there is large variation. As expected, government and executive actors (–0.02) as well as central banks (+0.04) and the judiciary (+0.14) are relatively positive about European institutions, whereas legislative and party actors are much more critical (–0.25). There is also important variation among civil society actors. Consumers groups, farmers, the residual category of other civil society organisations, financial experts, students and educational professionals, labour unions and employers all conform to our expectations and display below average levels of support for European institutions. That employer organisations and business firms are the least negative also fits our hypotheses because they were better represented in Europeanised public debates than most other civil society actors. Two other categories of civil society actors deviate from this pattern. Science, research and other professionals are slightly less negative about European institutions (–0.09) than the overall average, and immigrants even top the list with a positive score of +0.20, which is, however, based on few cases. We can speculate that what these actors have in common and may explain their supportive stance is that they both have a transnational habitus and profit above average from the internal freedom of

Table 5. Evaluation of European institutions by actor category

	Evaluation of European institutions	Evaluation of national institutions	Difference in evaluation of European and national institutions
Immigrants	(+0.20)	–0.57	+0.77
Judiciary	+0.14	–0.35	+0.49
Central banks	+0.04	–0.02	+0.06
Government/executive	–0.02	–0.09	+0.07
All state and party actors	*–0.06*	*–0.17*	*+0.11*
Science, research, and other professionals	–0.09	–0.27	+0.18
Employers and firms	–0.15	–0.22	+0.07
Legislative and parties	–0.25	–0.31	+0.06
All non-media civil society actors	*–0.30*	–0.34	+0.04
Media	–0.30	–0.18	–0.12
Unions and employees	–0.31	–0.39	+0.08
Students and educational professionals	–0.33	–0.47	+0.14
Economists and financial experts	–0.34	–0.15	–0.19
Other civil society groups and organisations	–0.38	–0.29	–0.09
Farmers	–0.50	–0.42	–0.08
Consumers	(–0.75)	–0.29	–0.46
Average	–0.12	–0.21	+0.09
N	4,681	8,481	12,182

Note: Scores in brackets are based on less than ten cases. The N in the final column is less than the sum of the other columns because, in some cases, European and national institutions were both addressed in one claim.

movement within the EU in the form of cross-national scientific exchange and research funding and simplified travel and visa regulations for immigrants.

The media are a further deviation from our expectations. Because news media are overrepresented among Europeanised claims, we expected them to be favourably inclined towards European institutions. However, media actors turn out to take a negative position, close to the average for non-media civil society actors. To make sense of this result, we must realise that the media have a special position in the public discourse. All other actors must struggle to get media attention. The media, however, can decide for themselves whether or not to speak out publicly without having to pass any selection hurdles. Thus underrepresentation or overrepresentation of the media in Europeanised public debates is not a function of the impacts of European integration on the discursive opportunities for the media, but is entirely a matter of editorial choice. Clearly, the ambiguous result for the media deserves closer inspection, but that would be a study of its own, which would also have to look at differences among individual newspapers (see Koopmans & Pfetsch (2003) for such an analysis for the German case).

In Table 6, we investigate whether these patterns hold if we look at general support for or opposition to the European integration process. We coded actors' general evaluations of the European integration process in a similar way as the evaluations of European addressees. A score of +1 was given if a claimant expressed support for the European integration process or if the claim implied extensions (or a rejection of restrictions) in the rights and prerogatives of European institutions. A score of –1 indicates opposition to the integration process or implications of the claim that restrict (or oppose extension of) the rights and prerogatives of European institutions. A score of 0, finally, indicates positions that are neutral or ambivalent towards the integration process.

The first important thing to note is that evaluations of the integration process are much more positive than evaluations of concrete European actors and institutions. Whereas almost all actors were on average critical of European institutions, with the single (and only slight) exception of farmers, no category of actors is on average opposed to European integration. Regarding differences among actors, the results confirm the earlier findings. State and party actors are more supportive of European integration than civil society actors, and within the former category, Euro-enthusiasm is clearly more limited among legislative and party actors than among government and executive actors. Most civil society actors display below average levels of support for European integration, and again employers and business organisations are comparatively positive about European integration. The difference with the position of labour unions is, however, much smaller than in Table 5, suggesting

the plausible interpretation that both groups are more or less equally supportive of European integration, but that employers are less dissatisfied with how European integration has been concretely implemented by European institutions than are labour unions. In contrast to Table 5, immigrants no longer deviate from other civil society actors, but science, research and other professionals again display a high level of support for European integration. The news media are again close to the average for non-media civil society actors.

We may conclude, then, that the hypothesis that the degree to which actors profit or stand to lose from the Europeanisation of public debates is mirrored in their support for European integration receives considerable, but not complete, support.[12] We are aware that there is a caveat here. Could it be that it is not discursive influence that determines actors' attitude towards Europe, but that the causal direction is the other way around – namely that the critical attitude of some actors towards the EU is the reason why they do not mobilise

Table 6. Evaluation of the European integration process by actor category

	Evaluation of the integration process
Government/executive	+0.32
Science, research, and other professionals	+0.30
All state and party actors	*+0.27*
Judiciary	+0.20
Employers and firms	+0.18
Central banks	+0.16
Unions and employees	+0.15
All non-media civil society actors	*+0.14*
Immigrants	+0.14
Media	+0.13
Legislative and parties	+0.13
Economists and financial experts	+0.12
Students and educational professionals	+0.09
Consumers	+0.08
Other civil society groups and organisations	+0.02
Farmers	–0.02
Average	+0.24
N	13,437

on the European level and do not frame issues in a European context? This alternative reading of our results does not strike us as convincing because there is no reason why actors who are opposed to European policies and institutions would refrain from mobilising on the European level, from addressing European policies and institutions, or from asking their national governments to do something about them. When we speak of Europeanised public debates, we do not mean a *unisono* chorus of Europhiles, but a contested discourse in which – just as in national public debates – opponents have as much reason to make their voices heard as supporters. Moreover, the myriad of civil society groups and NGOs that have organised and committed their scarce resources to setting up European representations and federations speak against a lack of attempts to gain a foothold on the European level. The simple fact is that among the voices that come to us from Brussels, these many organisations are hardly ever heard.

Conclusions and discussion

Earlier work has shown that the main problem regarding the Europeanisation of political communication is not of a quantitative nature. In those policy fields where Europe matters, European actors and actors from other Member States are frequently covered in national media, and national actors, including the media themselves, often refer to European dimensions of issues. However, this leaves open the possibility of a qualitative deficit of Europeanised political debates. The mass media public sphere on which European political communication relies even more than national political communication is a highly competitive environment in which actors compete for limited public visibility, resonance and legitimacy (Koopmans 2004b). European integration shifts the distribution of discursive opportunities and resources to influence public debates, improving the relative influence of some actors and weakening that of others.

Our results clearly demonstrate that thus far European integration has remained a project by political elites and, at least in as far as discursive influence is concerned, also to the benefit of political elites. Core state actors such as heads of state and government, cabinet ministers and central banks are by far the most important beneficiaries of the Europeanisation of public debates, in whichever form it occurs. Legislative and party actors – those actors from the core of the political system who are directly accountable to the electorate – are much less well represented in Europeanised public debates, both in an absolute sense and even more so relative to government and executive actors. Such an erosion of the contribution of parliaments and

political parties to public debates on Europeanised issues seems problematic from the normative point of view of democratic legitimacy and accountability. The same is true for the extremely weak representation of civil society actors in Europeanised public debates. Less resourceful civil society interests such as consumers' organisations, environmental groups or pensioners are even more strongly underrepresented in Europeanised public debates than more powerful groups such as labour unions and business interests.

The differences among the three forms of Europeanisation are also problematic from the point of view of the democratic quality of public debates. The strongest form of Europeanisation – namely the participation of European-level actors in public debates – is also by far the most exclusive. Civil society actors are almost completely absent from the voices that reach the national level coming down from the European level. Transnational flows of political communication across Member State boundaries are less exclusive, but still this horizontal form of Europeanised political communication is mainly a playground for statesmen and a few other powerful interests. The only form of Europeanised political communication in which the role of civil society actors approaches that in purely national debates is the vertical variant, in which national actors make claims within a European frame of reference either directly addressed at European institutions or more often addressed at national authorities, but referring to European identities, norms and legal frameworks. Yet even there the position of most civil society actors is weaker than in public debates of the 'traditional' type, which remain confined to a purely national frame of reference.

We have shown that these shifts in discursive influence are closely related to patterns of support for and opposition to European institutions and the European integration process. As a general rule, actors who are less influential in Europeanised public debates tend also to be more critical of European institutions and less supportive of the integration process than actors whose voices are more prominent in Europeanised public debates. The only consistent exception to this rule are science, research and other professionals, who are more than average supportive of European integration even though they are underrepresented in Europeanised public debates. Clearly, European integration's impact on actors' discursive influence is not the only factor that determines the position of collective actors on European integration. It is far from us to advocate a simplistic, monocausal explanation of support for European institutions and the integration process. Nonetheless, we are struck by the high degree of correspondence between objective discursive influence and subjective attitudes for most of the actors that we have investigated.

To be perfectly clear about what we mean to say: we do not maintain that the distribution of power in public debates is a free-floating phenomenon that

bears no relation to what some might maintain is the 'hard' power of policy influence. As we have tried to make clear throughout, we expect a high degree of correspondence between discursive and policy-making power and influence. Such correspondence can come about in at least two ways. First, power and prominence are important news values that structure the way in which media select a few 'newsworthy' claims for coverage and discard many others. Media professionals' knowledge of who is important and influential in European policy circles will therefore structure their news selection, with the result of a convergence between discursive and policy-making power. Second and conversely, influence in the public debate may translate into policy-making power. Successful mobilisation of media attention directly influences policy makers and has the potential of influencing the attitudes of the public at large, which in turn may affect policy makers' positions and the relative standing and power of actors in the policy process.

Whichever mix of these mechanisms operates, it should be clear that actors' influence in public debates is only semi-autonomous from actors' influence in the policy process. However, it is also so the other way around. We suggest that the strong association between policy influence and influence in public debates opens up new possibilities for employing methodologies similar to the one we have used as a complement to traditional policy analyses. Especially if one is interested in questions involving several issues and countries across a longer period of time, measuring actors' influence and position in public debates can be a reasonably accurate proxy for policy influence and policy positions, which are often hard to measure in more direct ways.

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Notes

1. Tarrow (1994: 85) defines political opportunity structures as 'consistent – but not necessarily formal or permanent – dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success and failure'.
2. The only exceptions are editorials from the coded newspaper. These will be analysed separately. All other claims by journalists from the coded newspaper were, however, included, as were any claims by other news media (including quotations from editorials) that were reported in the coded newspaper.
3. We have also gathered data on claims that were made by actors from countries outside Europe or by representatives of supranational institutions with a wider scope than Europe (e.g., the United Nations or NATO). However, we exclude those data from the present analysis because we are here interested in contrasting Europeanised and national claims-making.
4. Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union (except, of course, the three Baltic EU Member States) were excluded. It is admittedly to some extent contestable where exactly to draw the line between Europe and non-Europe. However, alternative operationalisations hardly affect our results because the vast majority of claims are from actors in the EU Member States and from the EU-level proper.
5. *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (Germany); *El Pais* and *Abc* (Spain); *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro* (France); *La Repubblica* and *Il Corriere della Sera* (Italy); *De Volkskrant* and *Algemeen Dagblad* (The Netherlands); *The Guardian* and *The Times* (United Kingdom); and *Le Temps* (appearing from 1998 onwards), the *Journal de Genève* (which was taken instead of *Le Temps* for the years 1990 and 1995) and *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (Switzerland).
6. *Leipziger Volkszeitung* (former East Germany); *La Vanguardia* (Catalunya, Spain); *Ouest France* (Western France); *Il Mattino* and *La Nazione* (Italy, respectively from Campania in the South and Tuscany in the Centre of the country); *Leeuwarder Courant* (Friesland, The Netherlands); *The Scotsman* (Scotland, United Kingdom); and *Le Matin* (French-speaking region, Switzerland).
7. *Bild-Zeitung* (Germany); *The Sun* (United Kingdom); and *Blick* (Switzerland).
8. *De Telegraaf* in the Netherlands.
9. *El Mundo* (Spain) and *L'Humanité* (France). In Italy, we chose a second regional newspaper as our fourth paper (see Note 6).
10. In the countries that are part of the Eurozone, there can likewise be no monetary politics claims that are purely national for the period since the introduction of the Euro. The monetary politics claims in Table 1 therefore refer either to the years 1990 and 1995, or to Switzerland and the United Kingdom for 2000–2002.

11. We checked whether our conclusions hold across countries, and also conducted all analyses for each country separately. Our main conclusions are highly consistent across countries. In each country-specific analysis, government and executive actors as well as the news media were overrepresented among Europeanised claims, and in each case civil society actors were strongly underrepresented.
12. Again, we found that the results were highly consistent across the seven countries. Government and executive actors are without exception more than averagely favourable towards European institutions and the European integration process. Everywhere, legislative and party actors are more skeptical; and in all seven countries, civil society actors show the lowest levels of support.

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